

# Iceland

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## Freedom of the Press

Freedom of expression is protected under Article 73 of the constitution, and the government generally does not interfere in the independent media's presentation of a wide variety of views. However, there are limitations to this freedom, including restrictions on verbal assaults based on race, religion, nationality, or sexual orientation.

A new media law ratified in 2011 contained a number of positive provisions, including editorial independence from media owners and the protection of sources. The country's libel legislation, which journalists have often criticized as an avenue to silence the press, also saw improvement. Under Article 51 of the new law, journalists can no longer be held responsible for potentially libelous quotes from their sources.

At the end of 2013, the Ministry of the Interior allegedly leaked a memo to the media about the case of a Nigerian asylum seeker; the memo included unproven allegations about the asylum seeker that were damaging to his reputation. Although media organizations reported on the memo uncritically, most outlets maintained silence on the matter when the daily newspaper *DV* began investigating the leak allegations. Lawyers representing the asylum seeker's partner filed charges against the ministry, citing breach of confidentiality and abuse of public office, and the state prosecutor is currently investigating the case.

The year 2013 saw little progress by the ambitious International Modern Media Institute (IMMI), which spearheads the Icelandic Modern Media Initiative—a parliamentary resolution, inspired by both the financial crisis and the antisecrecy organization WikiLeaks, that aims to make Iceland into a journalistic haven with strong protections for sources, whistleblowers, and freedom of expression and information at large. Although source protection has been implemented into law, most of IMMI's proposed changes are pending or incomplete. The new Information Act, passed in January 2013 to strengthen existing legislation, was cited by IMMI as unsatisfactory in its provisions for public access to information.

Physical attacks and harassment are not generally directed at journalists, and no cases were reported in 2013.

The country's wide range of publications includes both independent and party-affiliated newspapers, but the financial crisis that began in 2008 has led to cutbacks in both broadcast and print media. The Icelandic National Broadcasting Service (RUV) runs radio and television stations funded by license fees as well as by advertising revenue. Concentration of ownership remains a concern in Iceland, as the media company 365 controls much of the country's private television and radio broadcasting, the most widely circulated national newspaper, a major domestic news website, and several magazines. Around 97 percent of Iceland's population accessed the internet in 2013, and the country has the second-highest percentage of Facebook users in the world. The internet is not restricted by the government.

## 2014 Scores

### Press Status

Free

## **Press Freedom Score**

**(0 = best, 100 = worst)**

12

## **Legal Environment**

**(0 = best, 30 = worst)**

3

## **Political Environment**

**(0 = best, 40 = worst)**

4

## **Economic Environment**

**(0 = best, 30 = worst)**

5